DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 217 EA 019 732

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TITLE Mentoring: A Key Feature of the Danforth Program for the Preparation of Principals.
PUB DATE Oct 87
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Anniversary Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration (Charlottesville, VA, October 30-November 1, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; Adult Education; *Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Experiential Learning; Higher Education; *Mentors; *Principals; Professional Development; *Role Models
IDENTIFIERS *Danforth Foundation; *Ohio State University

ABSTRACT

The Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals now being implemented at four American universities embodies two major emphases: (1) collaboration between universities and school systems and (2) experiential learning approaches. One important program aspect is mentoring relationships between candidates and experienced local administrators. This paper describes the development and implementation of the mentoring component at Ohio State University (Columbus). After providing background and definitions, the paper describes informal, naturally developing mentoring formats found in private industry and in recent efforts to enhance women's leadership roles. More recently, the teacher education field has been contriving formal, mentoring arrangements. Six types of mentors are discussed, including traditional mentors, supportive bosses, organizational sponsors, professional career mentors, patrons, and invisible godparents. Realistically, the supportive boss and professional career mentors are the most useful for structured administrator preparation programs. The roles and responsibilities of Danforth Program mentors; identification, selection, and recruitment procedures; and training methods and activities are discussed. In closing, certain problems concerning mentor selection, matching mentors and candidates, and program manageability are addressed. Despite some decided limitations, there is great value in the mentoring approach for preparing administrators. Included are 14 references. (MLH)

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MENTORING: A KEY FEATURE OF THE DANFORTH PROGRAM FOR THE PREPARATION OF PRINCIPALS

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Charlottesville, Virginia
October, 1987

EA 019 732

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MENTORING: A KEY FEATURE OF THE DANFORTH PROGRAM FOR THE PREPARATION OF PRINCIPALS

The Danforth Foundation Program for the Preparation of School Principals currently being implemented in its first stage at Cleveland State University, Georgia State University, the University of Alabama, and The Ohio State University embodies a number of assumptions concerning needed modifications in the procedures utilized to assist aspiring administrators to become better prepared to take on future leadership responsibilities in schools. Two major emphases in this effort include the view that deliberate efforts must be directed toward increasing opportunities for collaboration to occur between universities and local school systems, and also the belief that preservice administrator preparation programs need to make extensive use of more experiential approaches to learning. These foci have, in turn, led to the adoption of practices that serve to distinguish the Danforth Program from traditional strategies followed in the preparation of school principals. Some of the ways in which this Program differs from more conventional approaches include the following:

1. There is an assumption that principal candidates must be held accountable and responsible for their own learning; no one else will "make them principals."
2. Collegial support from the other principal candidates in the Danforth program cohort is crucial to individual success.
3. There is a constant emphasis on the maintenance of collaborative relationships between universities and

other educational agencies.

4. Individual goal-setting and action planning by principal candidates is emphasized as a central feature of the process of ongoing personal professional development, a key ingredient in the Program.
5. A vide range of alternative instructional activities are available to principal candidates; there is a belief that mastery of important learning objectives related to the formation of future school principals may be attained through methods other than traditional university coursework.
6. Considerable deliberate focus is placed on the value of reflection by candidates as well as long-range planning for career development.
7. Mentoring relationships between candidates and experienced local administrators must be arranged; they are critical features of this Program because it is through these relationships that personal professional development may be monitored and improved.

In this paper, this last aspect of the Danforth Program--mentoring--is revieved. Particular emphasis is placed on the development and implementation of this program component to date at The Ohio State University. There is no effort to suggest that the other universities involved with the 1987-88 edition of the Danforth Program necessarily follov the same pattern; there is a belief that all institutions currently involved with the effort viev mentoring as an important part of their individual programs.

Background on Mentoring

A number of popular definitions are found in the literature for

"mentoring." For example, Ashburn, Mann, and Purdue (1987) defined mentoring as "the establishment of a personal relationship for the purpose of professional instruction and guidance." As a result, Lester (1981) noted that mentoring is an important part of adult learning because of its wholistic and individualized approach to learning, and that it is also a good example of experiential learning, "that is, learning resulting from or associated with experience" (Bova & Phillips, 1984). Given these perspectives, it is clear that a focus on the development of mentoring is a logical direction to be followed in the Danforth Program for the Preparation of School Principals.

The concept of making use of mentoring relationships to enhance professional preparation activities is certainly not a new one. The concept of the mentor serving as the wise guide to a younger protege dates back to Homer's Odyssey. Mentor was the teacher entrusted by Odysseus to tutor his son, Telemachus. Based on that literary description, we have been provided over the centuries an image of the wise counselor serving to shape and guide the lives of younger colleagues.

Mentoring as an accepted practice has been noted as part of the developmental process in many fields. As Schein (1978) noted), the concept has long been utilized in business organizations to connote such diverse images as "teacher, coach, trainer, positive role model, developer of talent, openner of doors, protector, sponsor, or successful leader." In fact, the current literature suggests that mentoring needs to be understood as a combination of most, if not all, of these individual role descriptors (Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986). Thus the practice of mentoring is a crucial one to be included as a component of an experiential professional preparation program. Guides and counselors (if the term "mentor" becomes over-used) are needed to help neophytes to a field find their way and "make sense"

of what is happening around them in an organization, and also what is going on in their personal lives.

One of the fields in which the importance of mentors has long been recognized is in the area of private business and industry. Here, younger members of the organization are shown the ropes and led toward greater career success through the intervention of others who provide the direction necessary to achieve goals and ambitions. The examples of senior colleagues is a key to greater happiness on the job. For the most part, this type of mentor-protege relationship has been an unformal one where parties in the relationship tend naturally to gravitate toward one another based on such things as common goals, common interests, and other factors that cannot be engineered by others. A senior staff member sees promise in a "new kid," takes an interest in that person's professional life, and over time, provides feedback to the younger co-worker so that he or she will have a better chance to succeed in the organization. The value of this type of naturally-developed mentoring has been seen by many companies as something that should be institutionalized and encouraged as a standard practice for all new employees. As a result, Keele, Buckner, and Bushnell (1987), among others, have noted that formal, organizationally-supported mentor programs have recently been initiated in settings such as the Internal Revenue Service and many large commercial banks and insurance companies. In these and other situations where mentoring has been vieved as an effective strategy to enhance personal and professional development, the bringing of new leaders "on board" assumes many of the following characteristics noted by Henry (1987):

1. Mentoring arrangements are a small but important part of normal management for selected employees.
2. What is typically referred to as "mentoring" often tends to be in fact an activity of "coaching."

3. Organizational cultures support the development of future managers, and thus there are typically certain formal or informal rewards associated with mentoring as well as being mentored.

In short, private industries have clearly recognized for quite some time that naturally-developed, informal mentor-protege relationships take place, that these relationships are important, and that they are of sufficient value that more formalized, institutionally-created mentoring arrangements are warranted.

Another area where the concept of mentoring has received considerable attention in recent years has been in the identification and development of women moving into leadership roles (Bolton, 1980). It has been obvious that one great barrier to women seeking advancement to positions of managerial prominence has been the lack of women serving as role models in superordinate situations in most organizations. There are few women in positions that are "higher up" in the system so that doors may be opened to individuals ready to assume greater responsibility, authority, or prestige. As a result, the mentor has been seen as a person who is critical to assisting the individual woman cope with the system by pointing out the proper routes to follow and ways to behave if she wishes to become more successful in the work place (Daloz, 1983). As was true of the mentoring role in the area of private business and industry, the mentor-protege relationship for women going into management (or any other professional role, in fact) tends to be an informal, natural, and evolved one that is not created by a system. It simply happens.

Within the last few years, the potential value of mentoring as a feature of professional development for educational personnel has been understood more precisely. In fact, it is generally accepted that wise, mature mentors have always been around to help new teachers to learn their trade in ways that were not always covered in

preservice teacher education programs in the university (Gehrke & Kay, 1984). What is now taking place with considerable regularity and visibility, particularly in the area of teacher education, is the development of formal, contrived mentoring arrangements. Recent studies by Krupp (1984), Little, Gallagher, and O'Neal (1984), Shovers (1984), and Huling-Austin, Barnes, and Smith (1985) have all described the importance of mentoring relationships as a way of helping classroom teachers, and have suggested that mentor systems must be deliberately started as a way to enhance the quality of the induction process for new teachers and increase the likelihood that beginning instructors will not fail but find greater success in the classroom. At this point, California has already mandated a mentoring system for new teachers within that state. Other similar laws requiring systems of mentoring will no doubt follow around the nation.

It is not particularly surprising, then, to note that the role of the mentor appears to be one that will continue to play a rather significant place in future schemes designed to improve the quality of other educational personnel, most notably school administrators. As emphasis has ben placed on efforts to find strategies for preparing school leaders that go beyond traditional university and classroom-based programs, there is a corresponding awareness that mentoring is an important concept that has obvious implications for the ways in which aspiring school administrators might have more successful learning experiences.

Types of Mentors

The designation of all people who have a major impact on the shaping of others' careers as "mentors" is probably incorrect. Phillips-Jones (1982) noted the fact that there are at least six

categories of people who serve as career guides to others:

1. Traditional mentors. (Usually older bosses, although they can also be teachers or family members who serve as protectors and parent figures for their proteges. They play a supportive, nurturing role for fairly long periods of time).
2. Supportive bosses. (Most common type of career mentors, and one found by most people at least at one point in their lives. It is a role that can be played by a boss, or anyone else who serves in a direct supervisory position over the protege, such as a teacher, coach, director, or school principal).
3. Organizational sponsors. (The man or woman who has reached the top echelon of management. From that position of power, he or she has a major say in determining a promotion to higher ranks).
4. Professional career mentors. (People who are deliberately hired to improve others' careers).
5. Patrons. (These individuals use their money or other material resources to launch careers).
6. Invisible godparent. (People who directly help a person reach his or her career goals without the protege knowing it).

The assumption appears to be that the "taditional mentor" is the most desirable one to be followed as a model in creating such positions as parts of training programs. The problem, however, is that traditional mentors are rarely found, and they are the least likely to be created articificially. The type mentorship that is probably most realistic for use in a formal, structured training program for future school administrators, however, is the "supportive boss" or "professional career mentor." The Ohio State University

approach to the Danforth Foundation Program has assumed that there is great value to be found in the concept of mentoring, but the likelihood of creating traditional mentor relationships is not great. Instead, mentors will best be understood along the lines of supportive bosses and professional career mentors.

Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors

An early decision made as part of the development of the Danforth Program at Ohio State was that, because mentoring was assumed to be an important feature of an experiential program, a critical issue would be the identification, selection, and recruitment of local school administrators in and around Columbus who would be able to work with principal candidates in mentor-protege relationships. It was necessary to develop a set of guidelines that could be utilized by university and local school district officials to decide who might best be selected to serve as program mentors. The following were suggested as some of the major responsibilities that would be assigned to individuals serving as Danforth Program mentors:

1. Mentors are to serve as initial contact persons between the university Program facilitator and candidates.
2. ... will make use of assessment data provided as part of the individual candidates' profiles as a way to determine activities that may be useful in addressing individual professional development objectives of the candidates.
3. ...would be available to respond to candidate questions and concerns.
4. ... are expected to be available on occasion to serve as contact people for candidates who come from other

schools and districts.

5. ...would participate in ongoing training activities sponsored by the Ohio State Danforth Program throughout 1987-88.
6. ...will be expected to provide feedback to the candidates and the university facilitator concerning candidate progress toward the achivement of their stated personal professional development goals.
7. ...will document personal reflections concerning problems, successes, and changes that occur to them throughout the term of the Program.

In addition to these stated responsibilities for mentors, it was also implied that they would work very directly as partners in the training process with university faculty. Long before the Danforth Program became available as a resource for program development at Ohio State, it was anticipated that the university faculty would be able to find more effective ways to work with a cadre of practitioners in the field, in much the same way that medical faculties are supplemented by clinical faculty members. The Danforth Program has been a way to revisit this earlier concept and find ways to translate the mentoring relationships with candidates into a resource for the educational administration program at large. Another issue that deserves notice is the fact that the original conceptualization of the "mentor" in this program always tended to minimize the career development and placement issues that are so often associated with functioning mentor-protege relationships. The focus of the mentor in this effort has been directed toward assistance with the induction process into administration. Responsibilities suggested for mentors have always paralleled that idea.

A number of desired characteristics were also listed and shared

with local school systems as the selection of individuals to serve as program mentors continued:

1. Mentors should have experience as a school principal, and should also be generally viewed as being effective in that role.
2. ...need an understanding of stated responsibilities for Danforth Program mentors.
3. ...must demonstrate generally-accepted positive leadership qualities such as (but not limited to):
    a. intelligence.
    b. good communication skills.
    c. past, present, future understanding and simultaneous orientation.
    d. acceptance of alternative solutions to complex problems.
    e. clarity of vision and ability to share that vision with others in the organization.
    f. interpersonal skills.
4. ...need to be able to ask the right questions of candidates, and not just provide the "right" answers all the time.
5. ...must accept "another way of doing things," and avoid the tendency to tell candidates that the way to do something is "The way I used to do it."
6. ...should express the desire to see people (candidates) go beyond their present levels of performance, even if might mean that they are able to do somethings better than the mentors might do the same things.
7. ...need to model the principle of continuous learning and reflection.
8. ...must exhibit awareness of the political and social

realities of life in at least one school system; they must know the "real way" that things get done.

9. ...need to be comfortable with participating in a developmental program that will probably ask them to make many suggestions for continuing program improvement. Mentors must also be able to live with a good deal of ambiguity concerning their specific roles and responsibilities as the program is developed.

Selecting the Mentors

Other considerations were also shared concerning the nature of the mentor program. For example, it was decided quite early in the development of the Program that a large part of the Danforth resource support would be all allocated to the area of mentor training, development, and support. Also, a number of other guidelines were developed to assist school districts to understand more completely what would also be involved with their participation in the mentor identification stage of the Danforth Program.

Each school district in Franklin County (the metropolitan service area surrounding Ohio State) was invited to nominate at least one mentor for the Program. This was true even if a district did not nominate a candidate. Twelve of 16 districts nominated mentors; five of those districts did not have candidates participating. By contrast, a district could not have candidates participating without also providing a mentor from the district. If multiple candidates were suggested, an equal number of mentors were requested. In short, each candidate must have a mentor from his or her home district, but each mentor does not necessarily have a candidate. At first, it was assumed that this would create some unusual problems. To date, there has not been any major difficulties.

School districts were asked to assume the responsibility for initial nominations of mentors. Before final decisions were made, however, the university facilitator made himself available to respond to any questions or concerns that potential mentors had. As it turned out, no one expressed any reluctance in serving as a mentor for the Program. All nominated mentors continue to remain with the Program.

Another guideline developed concerned the potential case of one or mentors deciding to leave the Program during the 1987-88 year. To date, this has not been an issue. However, it was decided that if an administrator decided to leave the mentor program, his or her spot would be made available to another individual from the same district. It was also decided that, if a candidate were to drop from the Program, his or her mentor would continue to be welcome in the Program.

Specialized Mentor Training

A key feature of the Danforth Foundation Program has been its emphasis on the need to provide special training and support to those administrators who agree to serve in the important role of mentor. At Ohio State, the principal training provided to this point has come about through a formal, week-long special Mentor Institute provided for university credit in August, and also at least one special training event that has been carried out during the school year.

Mentor Institute

Soon after Ohio State was designated as a Danforth site for the 1987-88 academic year, and also when it became apparent that the mentoring concept would play a vital role on the overall program, it was decided that some type of early training and orientation would need to be carried out for the people selected as Danforth mentors.

It was decided that an appropriate vehicle for this training would be a special university-credit course that would be held prior to the beginning of the school year. This Mentor Institute, an activity approved to provide 3 hours of graduate credit at Ohio State, took place between August 10-14, 1987.

The stated objectives of the Mentor Institute were:

1. To enable participants to to understand the goals and objectives of the Danforth-OSU Program for the Preparation of School Principals.
2. To enable participating mentors to become familiar with their responsibilities and opportunities during the next year, and also to meet the other mentors who would be involved with the Program.
3. To develop understandings of what the concept of "mentoring" is all about.
4. To develop awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses that may be called upon in the mentor role.
5. To understand the "vision of administration" that is present in the current Ohio State Principal Preparation Program.
6. To consider the differences that exist between "Learning in the Field" and "Experiential Learning."
7. To work out operational details related to the implementation and monitoring of the Danforth-Ohio State Program during the 1987-88 school year.

A variety of activities were utilized during the week to help the mentors achieve their objectives. Other faculty members and external consultants worked with the mentos on such issues as developing better understandings of experiential learning, the nature of the Ohio State administration preparation program, and individual personality development. One particularly effective session was a

panel discussion involving two pairs of informal, true mentor relationships (one involving two physicians and another with two Catholic priests) who were able to discuss the nature of their ongoing, mutually supportive relationships. A good deal of time during the week was also devoted to discussions between and among the mentors, some candidates who attended, and the university facilitator concerning the operation of the program. A series of operational guidelines for the year were generated at the end of the Institute.

Personality Styles Workshop

Another special training event that has also been carried out for mentors and candidates was a two-day session concerning the analysis of individual personality styles and their aplication to mentor-protege relationships. This event, vieved by most participants as a valuable team-building experience, was led by a local consultant.

Other Activities

Further training activities for mentors are also planned throughout the 1987-88 academic year. These will include social/business meetings between the mentors and university faculty members at least three times during the year. In addition, special inservice events involving guest speakers and consultants are planned.

What Do We Know, and What Happends Next?

The experiences with the concept of mentoring thus far completed do not serve to make anyone associated with the Program an expert in this area. Nevertheless, certain insights have been gained to the extent that changes would probably be made in the future if the opportunity were once again presented to develop this type of activity for preparing future school administrators.

For one thing, it is likely that greater control and care would be exercise concerning the selection of mentors. For the most part, the "vision" of mentoring that was shared with the districts was respected, and the individual administrators selected for the role are excellent and will serve as good role models for candidates. This outcome came about mostly by good luck, and not by good planning. If one of the things that has negatively marked field-based administration programs in the past has been negative role modeling by some practitioners, the identification of mentors cannot be left to chance in the future. School districts must receive considerable guidance in the choice of individuals to serve as exemplary leaders in the experiential program. The first step toward this would be further clarity concerning the ongoing goals and objectives of the candidate-preparation program. Districts will be able to send high quality school leaders to serve in similar projects only if they are aware of what the programs are designed to do. Furthermore, universities need to be clear in their expectations that mentors have a defined role to play, and that mentor training and service cannot be seeen as an appropriate place for school districts to send their principals who need to be "improved" by some additional learning opportunities. In short, only the best principals will be acceptable as mentors, and care must constantly be exercised to make certain that the "best of the best" become role models.

Greater emphasis must also be placed on the imrpovement of the matching of mentors and candidates. The mentor relationship is important, but it will be fulfilled only if there is some type of positive relationship fostered between the individual candidate and the person who will serve as a guide. The current program is characterized by mentor-protege relationships which are mostly "arranged or shotgun marriages." In the future, time needs to be devoted to allov more natural pairing of aspiring and practicing

administrators.

The scale of the program needs to be made more manageable in the future. The Ohio State-Danforth Program for 1987-88 includes 18 candidates from seven school systems, 25 mentors representing 12 districts, and only one university faculty member as facilitator (as well as professor with typical faculty responsibilities). It was never known the amount of constant attention that a program such as this would take, particularly in the earliest stages of helping mentor and candidates to "find each other." There is a constant need to direct communication from candidates to candidates, from the Program to the university, from mentors to other mentors, and from mentors to candidates. This cannot be seen as an "add-on" program for a university.

Although these three observations seem to be critical of the program in general, the important thing to realize is that, despite some needed improvements, there is clearly a great value in this approach to the preparation of school administrators. It is worth making the suggested changes noted here to make the program stronger in the future. The enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated to date by mentors and candidates is remarkable, and it is likely that the remainedr of this year will see more of the same. What is raised in this discussion, however, is a clear need for further analysis of the importance of mentoring for helping people to become administrators. In this last way, the discussion in this paper must be understood as something that goes considerably beyond the review of a special externally support effort such as the Danforth Program. Mentoring ultimately implies the need to examine the likelihood that administrators will take on increasing responsibility for training their future colleagues. As such, there is great need to make certain that these types of programs start as positive experiences so that they can do no less than get better over time.

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